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ABSTRACT

Three techniques for teaching effective reading--using students' textbooks, reading modules, and individual instructional packets--have proven successful in reducing reading time while improving comprehension skills for students in a reading and study skills course at a Texas university. Students assigned to the course use their content area textbooks and are taught an amplified version of the SQ3R system of study. This system, based on the acronym FAIRER (scan for Facts, Ask questions; Identify details as major or minor, Read the work as a whole, Evaluate comprehension, and Review by summarizing each subheading), helps students develop speed and comprehension simultaneously. The reading module activities provide students with a pretest, instructional activities, and a posttest and are designed to permit students a degree of success immediately. The module topics are as follows: (1) environmental study controls, (2) listening and taking notes, (3) vocabulary development, (4) study techniques, (5) topic sentences and main ideas, (6) library skills, and (7) reading the novel. Individual instructional packets contain exercises in the area of a student's greatest weakness, as indicated by diagnostic tests. Each student is expected to spend a minimum of 30 hours on the exercises, under the supervision of the instructor. (HTH)

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THREE APPROACHES TO TEACHING COLLEGE READING SKILLS

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THREE APPROACHES TO TEACHING COLLEGE READING SKILLS

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress in their academic pursuit can attribute some of the failure to the inability to read effectively. Frequently, the students have not been trained to read effectively which allows them to perform below their capabilities. A lack of purpose and reading flexibility also contribute to the inefficient reading skills. A good reader must have an established purpose, be flexible enough to adjust rate to varied reading tasks as well as a good command of vocabulary in general and specialized areas. With this notion in mind, three techniques of teaching reading at the college level have proven to be very effective. The three approaches include using students' textbooks, modules, and individual instructional packets. These approaches have proven to be effective in reducing reading time while at the same time improving comprehension skills for students who enroll in reading and study skills courses at Texas Southern University.

Selection Procedures

All beginning and undergraduate transfer students are required to take a series of tests, one of which is the Nelson-Denny Reading Tests Form C (1), as part of the admission requirements. Students who score below 10.0 in total reading on the Nelson-Denny Reading Tests are required to take the basic reading and study skills course. Students who score above

10.0 on the same instrument may enroll in developmental reading as an elective. Both groups of students are administered the Reading Comprehension Test Form A and Vocabulary Test Form A batteries of the Descriptive Tests of Language Skills of the College Board (3 and 4) before any instruction is given. A complete analysis of these tests is prepared on each student as an aid in identifying students who need special assistance in reading and vocabulary development. An analysis of reading habits and performance is also made on each student before he is assigned to a particular reading instructional mode. As suggested in the Guide to the Use of the Descriptive Tests of Language Skills (5), students are then assigned to instructional groups taking into consideration the type of instruction which is likely to be the most effective in helping the students overcome their particular deficiencies. Students who score above 10.0 on the Nelson-Denny Reading Tests and have a 74%ile rank or above on the Reading Comprehension Test are assigned to instruction using the individual instructional packets. Students who score below 10.0 and the 74%ile rank on the respective tests are assigned to reading modules (2). Students who enroll in developmental reading are taught reading skills through the use of their current textbooks.

Teaching Approaches

Students' Current Textbooks

Students assigned to reading instruction through the use of their current textbooks do not experience severe deficiences

in their reading skills. The FAIRER method (6) is applied to chapter readings. The FAIRER method is an amplified version of the SQ3R system of study advocated by Francis P. Robinson (7). Steps involved in the FAIRER methods:

F = Facts. In a scanning process the student should code all revelant facts by marking an "F" over the fact or high light it by using a transparent marker.

A = Ask questions on the reading as a result of isolating specific facts.

I = Identify details as major or minor. Keep in mind that major details elaborate on the central theme while minor details are lesser important.

R = Read the work as a whole. This effort involves grasping the main idea, understanding relationship and direct statements.

E = Evaluate. The reader evaluates his reading effectiveness by taking a comprehension check. This is done by stating the central theme in a single sentence, list the main headings and the principle ideas under each heading, and give a synopsis of the reading. This step should be done without looking at the pages.

R = Review. Review is a survey of what one has already studied. Skim over the headings of the chapter and ask yourself what they mean and what they have under them. Check the points that you have previously read and that you hope to remember. Re-read enough to check yourself and see either that you haven not left anything out or that your memory is refreshed.

Review summaries by reciting them first and then check yourself by re-reading.

The FAIRER method helps one to develop speed and comprehension simultaneously. Knowing how to classify the various elements will enable the reader to put the information into a proper prospective .

Reading Modules

The use of reading modules was initiated at Texas Southern University Reading and Study Skills Center in September, 1975. The reading modules were developed to interface with the Competency Based Acdemic Foundation Program (CBAFP) which allows students to concentrate on developing skills necessary for academic progress at the college level. The reading component of the CBAFP addresses itself to the needs, interests, and varied learning styles of the urban, educationally deprived learner (8).

In an effort to restructure the reading program to incorporate the most essential competencies necessary for developing adequate reading and study skills, nine competencies were identified. The competencies are as follow:

1. Develop effective communication skills
2. Develop analytical skills
3. Develop decision making and problem solving skills
4. Develop awareness and understanding of the structure and history of the social and political institutions
5. Develop knowledge, understanding, and responsiveness of the natural and/or physical sciences
6. Recognizes the physical mechanics involved in reading

7. Develop understanding of arts and humanities and the contribution they make to the technological base

8. Develop awareness and understanding of the similarities and differences of ethnic groups

9. Develop awareness and knowledge of behavior patterns which affect personal and social relations.

Seven instructional modules were constructed by Burleson (2) which placed primary thrust on communication. Students who successfully complete the modules will be able to demonstrate sufficient skills to (a) study effectively, organize and react to materials in college textbooks; (b) use general and specialized vocabulary; (c) read critically; (d) employ flexibility in reading rate according to the materials and tasks; (e) employ the necessary reading skills to meet changing vocational demands and opportunities; and (f) effect personal and social adjustment.

Each module provides the student with pretest, instructional activities in sufficient quantities to allow the student to be recycled through the module at least twice if necessary, and a posttest. The modules are so constructed that they will permit the student to experience a degree of success at the onset. This is done purposefully to help the student build confidence in his ability to succeed. It is essential for each student to work the modules in sequence because they progress in difficulty and complexity of skills. It is unlikely that a student will attain a high level of performance on a subsequent module without having performed satisfactorily on the preceding module.

Module 1: Environmental Study Controls. This module requires no prerequisite. Upon successful completion of this module, the student will be able to (a) identify at least eight environmental controls for proper study; (b) design a weekly time-use analysis chart; and (c) operate cassette and reel-to-reel tape recorders with proficiency.

Module 2: Listening and Taking Notes. The student is provided activities which will improve listening by active mentally and by categorizing lectures into parts. Through the use of this module, the student will be able to (a) identify categories employed in analyzing lectures; (b) take notes from lectures using systematic techniques; (c) analyze lectures from various sources to determine the organizational patterns employed in the body of those lectures.

Module 3: Vocabulary Development. This module is designed to make the student aware of word relationship in context and basic knowledge of word parts through structural analysis. Upon completion of this module the student will be able to (a) recognize contrast, summary, experience and definition contextual clues; (b) write at least 25 words containing different prefixes; (c) write correctly sentences making use of words which contain at least 10 different suffixes; (d) make a list of twenty sentences, each containing a word which is derived from a common Latin root; (e) make a list of 20 sentences, each containing a word which is derived from a common Greek root; (f) apply dictionary skills using practice materials from a Learning Packet.

Module 4: Study Techniques. Stress is placed on the im-

portance of the student being able to develop good study habits. The student is drilled on effective study and power of concentration. He is convinced that effective study and concentration become habitual through the application of a systematic technique. The technique must be consistent in scheduling time which will be realistic and practical, but at the same time sufficiently flexible enough to maintain an adequate balance between work and social activities. Upon completion of this module the student will be able to (a) describe the steps involved in the SQ3R system for study; (b) demonstrate the SQ3R method; (c) underline in paragraphs with proficiency as a study technique; (d) write correctly a topic and sentence outlines for chapter assignments; (e) take systematic notes from readings, recordings, and lectures; (f) distinguish between analyzing, outlining, and summarizing as means of notetaking.

Module 5: Topic Sentences and Main Ideas. Students will realize from the use of this module that reading is a thought related process. Upon the completion of this module the student will be able to (a) identify the topic, topic sentence and state the main idea of a paragraph; (b) state the main idea in longer selections; (c) recognize the five basic patterns of paragraph development; (d) classify types of comprehension as literal, interpertative, critical, assimilative and creative.

Module 6: Library Skills. This module is designed to acquaint the student with many facilities of a library so he may locate materials quickly and easily. By completing this module, the student will be able to (a) use open stacks; (b) know classification numbers for books in his prospective field of study;

(c) locate books using three different kinds of cards found in the Card Catalog; (d) identify and use at least five different sorts of reference books.

Module 7: Reading the Novel. This module is designed to show the student that reading can be fun. Upon completion of this module the student will (a) exemplify his appreciation of a novel by voluntarily entering into a discussion or dramatization expressing his knowledge of the novel read; (b) construct at least two questions for each of the five levels of comprehension. The questions will be discussed in class.

Individual Instructional Packets

Students who are assigned individual instructional packets do not suffer a severe weakness in their overall reading proficiency. The packets are prepared for each student based on his diagnostic test result. The area in which the student evidences the greatest weakness is his initial starting point. The student will continue to work exercises on a particular skill until a satisfactorily level of achievement has been attained before moving to another skill. Because the instruction is highly individualized, the class size is small. The students are required to meet two hours per week; however, once a students has been assigned to complete specific packets, he may elect to spend more than the minimum amount of time which has to be done under the supervision of an instructor. Each student is expected to spend a minimum of 30 hours of supervised instruction.

The three instructional approaches described herein have proven to be very beneficial to students mainly because the

students have been made to feel they can succeed in spite of their reading deficiencies. They have been made aware of their weaknesses and how to overcome most of the barriers to academic success.

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